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REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 1, 10, 20 and 21 are amended. Claims 23 and 24 new. Claims 2, 11-15, 17-19, and 22 remain pending and unchanged.

The telephonic interview held between the undersigned and the Examiner on Friday, November 3, is acknowledged with appreciation. During the interview, the rejections set forth in Paragraphs #3 and #4 were discussed. To reach agreement as to language and overcome these rejections, the undersigned proposed "pivotal" in place of "safety" or "spring-biased". Also specifically discussed was the rejection of claim 12 in Paragraph #4. It remains the undersigned's position that the language of claim 12 is consistent with that of claim 2, and is supported; accordingly, this aspect of the Paragraph #4 rejection is traversed; otherwise, it is believed that amendment to "pivotal" overcomes the rejections of Paragraphs #3 and #4. Accordingly, withdrawal of these rejections is believed to be in order and requested.

Also proposed by the undersigned during the interview was language stating that in a closed strap-securing position, the pivotal locking pins form a closed loop. Pointed out by the undersigned during the interview, was language in claim 21 stating (with a proposed change to pivotal locking pins) that the pivotal locking pins extend through the strap attachment loops. Also discussed was the feature of claims 19 and 22.

By this Amendment, the claims are amended to set forth clarifying language discussed during the interview, with emphasis on defining inventive features. Support for an open position and a closed position of the pivotal locking pins, and for locking pins extending through strap attachment loops may be found on page 6 in the 2nd ("open position"), 3rd ("open position"), and 4th ("pin ... is placed through guide loop"; "closed position") paragraphs under OPERATION. For consistency in the claims, the term "locking pin" is used throughout, noting the broad

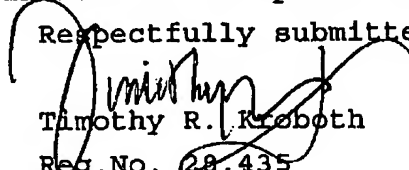
interpretation given by the Patent Office to "pin" by prior art cited and relied upon.

Turning now to the art rejections of Paragraphs #6 and #7, wherein Gallaway and Kay are relied upon under 35 USC 102(b) to reject all pending claims, these rejections are respectfully traversed, and reconsideration and withdrawal thereof are requested.

The pin of Gallaway's cited Fig. 5 strap attachment structure is not a pivotable locking pin that has an open position, and that in a closed strap-securing position, forms a closed loop. Instead of a closed loop and pivotable pin, Gallaway's Fig. 5 strap attachment structure appears to rely upon friction fit of an insertable pin with a tubular fastening element 12. With respect to cited Figs. 15 and 16 of Kay, Kay discloses the use of a locking clip, not a locking pin, and discloses that the locking clip forms an open loop, not a closed loop, in a strap-securing position.

In view of the foregoing, withdrawal of all rejections is respectfully requested. Should any minor matter remain unresolved, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned.

Respectfully submitted,

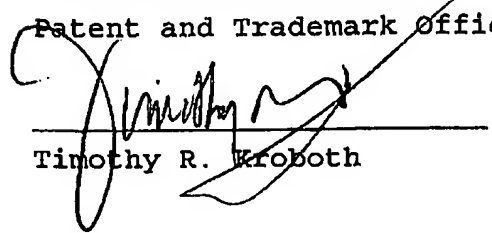

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CERTIFICATION OF FACSIMILE TRANSMISSION

I hereby certify that this paper is being transmitted to the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office on November 9, 2006.


Timothy R. Kroboth

Date: November 9, 2006